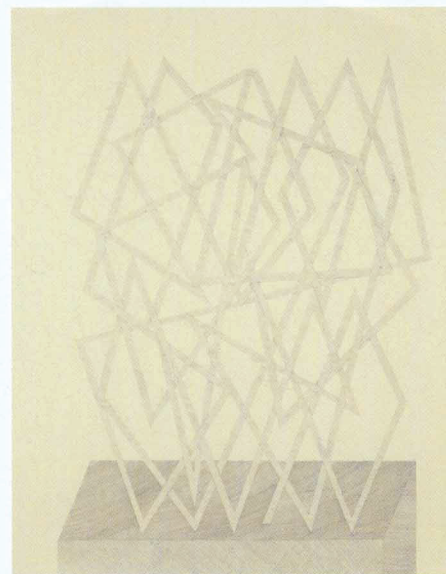


Denyse Thomasos: *Lollipop Nation*, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 40 by 54 inches; at Lennon, Weinberg.



Peter Peri: *Head 16*, 2009, graphite on paper, 28¼ by 23½ inches; at Bortolami.

Blaché—a woman who broke ground in her work and placed art at the center of her life.

—Lyra Kilston

DENYSE THOMASOS LENNON, WEINBERG

In "The Divide: New Paintings," her first solo exhibition in New York in a decade, Trinidad-born, New York-based Denyse Thomasos presented 10 paintings (all acrylic on canvas, 2009). Each envelops components of a metastasizing metropolis in an expansive, hyperbolic space. Not castles in the air but housing blocks, bunkers and warehouses, the structures loom and dissolve like ghosts or memories. The artist's forebears include Futurist prophets of the cult of the machine as well as such boulevard Cubists as Robert Delaunay and Lyonel Feininger, who heard a crazy heart thumping beneath the rational facade of urban architecture.

The palette of Thomasos's *Nesting* is typical, rooted in neutralized secondary hues and inflected earth colors with the occasional flare-up of turquoise, rosy pink, blue or yellow. The artist integrates black and white into her palette with a rare confidence. Her bouquets of perspectival orthogonals cohere, at bottom right, into a shape suggesting the curve of a boat's hull. Thomasos often pulls back from the edges and corners, going a bit soft there relative to the graphical tautness of her paintings' centers. Even where corners are firm, as in *Lollipop Nation*, the viewer regards the profusion of forms from something of an elevated vantage point.

Inca Matrix scrambles judicious smears of paint, glassy transparencies

and the kind of precise, generic diagrams you might see in the later chapters of a textbook on perspective. In this work and others, Thomasos employs a classic technique of pre-CAD rendering: the line fattens where the hand slows, expressing strength close to the joint of post and beam. The busted or skewed grid has been a staple of abstract painting from Jack Tworok and Al Held to Al Loving and Jack Whitten, but Thomasos brings a lovely, lilting take to the contest between freedom and restraint.

On a wall-mounted monitor, a video slide show looped the artist's "visual research": vernacular and sacred architecture in Mali, Senegal, Cambodia and China, plus slave ships, super-max prisons, abattoirs. Doubtless meant to be helpful, the decision to display these images undermined the integrity of the paintings by divulging sources, suggesting that the artist is less than fully confident in her work, or in her audience's ability to respond to it intelligently. It also signaled that Thomasos wishes to guide, if not control, the viewer's interpretation. Nothing wrong with that. But if the display of research material signals an interest in the sociopolitical implications of architectural form, it would be expressed more effectively in the paintings themselves.

—Stephen Maine

PETER PERI BORTOLAMI

The tropes taken up by Peter Peri, a young British artist, are esoteric (cult objects; the career of his Constructivist grandfather) and unlikely (impossible

perspectives by way of M.C. Escher). The sum total of these references is nostalgia for a time when eccentricity was a qualifier for artistic genius. There is, in turn, a fetishistic effect to the forms Peri creates, which have expertly rendered surfaces both slick and textured; his depiction of volume and recession is also adeptly controlled.

Peri's recent show was divided by medium into three distinct bodies of work with overlapping interests and differing levels of efficacy. The graphite drawings shared a magnifying-glass level of detail, with capillary-fine lines like those in works he has shown previously. All are titled as if they were figure studies but depict (with one exception) geometric configurations; tricky trompe-l'oeil perspectives and shading give the elementary shapes an illusion of body and depth. Four of the drawings looked like wooden models or animal traps set weightlessly on plinths. *Head 16* (all works 2009) could be a LeWitt grid sculpture reimaged in plywood by a mischievous and finicky child, its perpendiculars rearranged in a way that feels both alarmingly chaotic and sweetly nonsensical. *Knot Woman (Reclining)* is a strangely rigid, complex pretzel that balances precariously on its plinth, spilling toward the viewer.

A high point was the one figurative drawing, *Odalisque*, after Ingres's 1814 painting, done in Peri's elegant style and reversed as if by mirror (which puts her head on the right side of the image). As a result, the subject seems to experience the same visual disturbance as the



Richard Misrach:
Untitled, 2007, pigment
print on Dibond,
59 by 78 7/8 inches;
at PaceWildenstein.

scopophilic viewer. Peri further implies that Ingres's complicated relationship to classical figuration is in a way analogous to our troubled engagement with high Modernist formalism.

The emphasis on draftsmanship that Peri shares with Ingres is evident in his abstract paintings. Peri divides his canvases into geometric sections that seem to be improvisations on *de Stijl*, but swap out pure color for depth. *Polish Doughnut*, an arrangement of triangles with various illusionistically recessed areas, bears no evident connection to the sugary treat. Rather, the effect is similar to Frank Stella's "Polish Village" series, although Peri's patterning and composition are more regular. Using oil and acrylic, Peri creates a flat but tactile surface, adding a final coat of spray paint that gives the works a glossy patina; one senses a deliberate disjunction between his painstaking attention to detail and the spurt of the spraycan. *Vision Remembered Forever* is a silver panel with two perspectival vortices in opposite corners. They nearly converge to the right of the panel's center, where attention is spun and then suspended.

For his sculptures, Peri makes metal casts of geometric objects in his studio—washers, masking tape—and arranges them into cute little figures that sometimes take a reclining pose. They highlight Peri's interest in art historical periods as precious sources of wonder; compared with the livelier ideas evident in the two-dimensional work, the sculptures are conceptually inert.

—Alex Gartenfeld

RICHARD MISRACH PACEWILDENSTEIN

Firmly identified with the introduction of color to "fine" photography in the 1970s, and with the use of large-format traditional cameras, Richard Misrach is an established poet of the world as it is. In his new photographs (2007-09), made mostly with digital equipment, he casts that role aside. The images remain big, even epic—many are 10 feet high or wide—and almost implausibly beautiful. And their subject is still the natural landscape. But that landscape's grandeur is undermined by a simple procedure (or a simply summarized one; its application is probably much more complicated). The colors are reversed when output as pigment prints, making the photographs chromatic negatives.

The results are surprisingly disorienting. On the shore of a limpid, orange-tinged expanse of water, a hump-backed blue landmass lies like a beached whale, though we know it must be a low hill glowing red in raking light. (In fact, it is a sand dune on a lake in Nevada.) Sharply etched forms, some frigid blue and some nearly white, rise out of the sea like icebergs; in actuality they are dark, rocky outcroppings along the Oregon coast. The curl of surf in one shot is a fleshy, almost comically tender pink. A sublime—no other word serves—image of luminous indigo clouds blossoming hugely above a glassy sea, and flowering even more decadently in reflections on the water's surface, looks like nothing on the planet at all.

A few photographs are very nearly abstract, with allover patterns of hard-to-identify vegetation (seaweed, though you'd never know it, in one case, and dense, leafless shrubbery in another) distributed evenly across the picture plane; Pollock, and perhaps Mark Tobey, seem to be reference points. And several images are almost entirely drained of color. This is where the new work seems most polemical, and in some ways most interesting. A feathery line of trees stands ghostly white against a pitchy sky, in one photo. In another, a choppy body of black-veined white water terminates abruptly at a dark horizon, in a minimalist composition that recalls seascapes by Hiroshi Sugimoto and by Vija Celmins. Both images pose the question, if darkness is the opposite of light, what is the opposite of color?

Photography didn't invent black-and-white imagery, but it certainly caused it to proliferate so widely that when color was introduced to the medium, it seemed almost unnatural. With his new work, Misrach appears determined to renew that sense of unfamiliarity—to revive the idea that color is unreliable, artificial. But he is careful not to put its seriousness at risk. It's a tricky balance to strike.

—Nancy Princenthal

KEN PRICE MATTHEW MARKS

The 12 new abstract sculptures that Ken Price recently installed at Matthew Marks's 22nd Street space felt like an extended family, with three large-scale pieces in painted bronze composite